



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE

MEDIA RELEASE

SILICOSIS INQUIRY – REPORT TABLED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 March 2020

The Standing Committee on Law and Justice today tabled its report into silicosis in the manufactured stone industry. The Upper House Committee used its regular oversight review of the Dust Diseases Scheme to focus on the re-emergence of silicosis as an occupational dust disease, in light of the growing prevalence of the acute lung condition amongst manufactured stone workers.

The Committee Chair, the Hon Wes Fang MLC, stated: 'New South Wales, along with other jurisdictions across the country, has seen an alarming increase in cases of silicosis in recent years. In particular, accelerated silicosis – caused by short term exposure to large amounts of crystalline silica dust – continues to claim the health and livelihoods – and in some cases, the lives – of young workers'.

'Having observed this trend with great concern over the last two reviews of the Scheme, this targeted inquiry has revealed not only evidence of a mounting problem in the industry, but an indication of poor safety standards and an unsatisfactory compliance regime,' said the Chair. 'And at the heart of it all, diagnosed workers have been left asking "why didn't I know about this sooner?"'.

The Chair continued: 'While we acknowledge the NSW Government's efforts to address this problem to date, it is clear that there is much more work to be done. We have therefore made a suite of recommendations that aim to not only protect workers from exposure to crystalline silica but to provide support after they are diagnosed. This includes ensuring medical screening is readily available to all workers in the manufactured stone industry, and that appropriate control measures are in place to lower the risk, such as an explicit ban on dry cutting. Measures to ensure industry standards are lifted and regulatory enforcement is strengthened are also recommended'.

'We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these recommendations in our next review', concluded the Chair. 'We must – and we can – put an end to this preventable disease'.

The report and other inquiry documents can be found on the committee's website at:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/law>

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Wes Fang MLC, on 9230 2888